

Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: Docket 18-336
Implementation of the National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act of 2018

Dear Commissioners

I write urging you to designate a 3-digit code as a Behavioral Health and Suicide Crisis Lifeline – and to reject the North American Numbering Council (NANC) recommendation that no such line should be established.

Over 47,000 people in the United States died by suicide in 2017, according to the Center's for Disease Control. 1.3 million adults in the United States attempted suicide in 2017, and nearly 10 million had serious thoughts of suicide.

We obviously are in the midst of a crisis in the United States – we are losing loved ones, neighbors and colleagues to suicide at a shocking and unprecedented rate. I work in the construction industry and understand from statistics that construction is the number two industry for suicides. That statistic is staggering. No one in our community, our state or our nation is unaffected by suicide. Recently at my company we had a young man climb 290 feet up a tower crane who was in crisis. An entire construction site was traumatized by the potential of a negative outcome. We were lucky as crisis negotiators were able to intervene. However, what if there was an easier, simpler way to provide access immediately through an easy to remember three digit number? These situations are happening every day across the nation. This includes the periodic news headlines giving staggering numbers of Veterans who are taking their lives on a daily basis. We also hear weekly if not daily about children in our community taking their lives by suicide. And more recently we see headlines about suicide of elder adults who are isolated or dealing with major health issues that see no hope.

When in crisis getting **direct** access immediately is critical for assistance. Having a three digit dedicated number for those in crisis would be a huge benefit to not only those in crisis but those around them. I have no understanding of why the NANC believes simply tagging suicide on to another three digit number's purpose would suffice. The success of targeted 3 digits numbers in our nation cannot be argued.

Three-digit access is a natural next step given the growth and proven effectiveness of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

And 3-digit access will also help remove the stigma associated with mental health challenges. We are doing what we can in the construction industry to have open and honest discussions about Mental Health, however, we are only one company. I believe 3-digit access to crisis services represents a

national recognition that seeking help for behavioral health and suicidal crisis is just as much a part of life as seeking help for fire, for injury, or for other health and wellness needs.

211 Info is a vital service – but it is not a “crisis”, “I need help”, this very second line. The very last thing a person in crisis needs is a lengthy automated phone tree – what fragile callers need is a **human connection** – with a behavioral health counselor specifically trained to help people thinking about killing themselves.... How many of us including myself hang up the minute you get the automated voice advising you of which button to push. For the person in crisis and someone finding help for someone in crisis – the last think you want is an automated push the button directional.

While 211Info provides a vital service – connection to a vast array of social services, 211Info’s mission and expertise does not include mental health services – and the reality is that crisis calls to 211 generally result in referral to an NSPL affiliate. This becomes super complicated. Most people hang up before they even complete the referral. What a person in crisis needs is to talk to someone. **Using 211 as a crisis portal would add a layer – of time and delay – to people in crisis who need help now. Seconds count when someone is considering taking their life.**

It with great concern that I write you encouraging and imploring you to establish a separate three digit code for those in the moment of greatest mental health need. I do this knowing the significance of establishing a three digit line and I do so knowing that there can be no downside to addressing a growing issue that affects more people than not. Thank you very much for your thoughtful approach to this important issue that affects the vast majority of our population if not directly, indirectly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sheri Sundstrom". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Sheri" and last name "Sundstrom" clearly legible.

Sheri Sundstrom
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